

# Challenges of the Common Security and Defence Policy

ESDC 2<sup>ND</sup> SUMMER  
UNIVERSITY BOOK

Edited by Anna Molnár, Daniel Fiott,  
Foteini Asderaki and  
Sylvain Paile-Calvo



We inspire, we train, we challenge!

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# Contents

■ 1. Foreword .....	5
■ 2. Introduction.....	7
■ 1. EU Power and Strategic Autonomy .....	9
Sylvain Paile-Calvo: Strategic compass and strategic culture: what roles for the European Security and Defence College?.....	10
Anna Molnár: The idea of a European Security and Defence Union.....	19
Quentin Loïez: The European Union and Strategic Autonomy: a Quest for Power?.....	37
Neli Kirilova: Elements of power in the EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy.....	55
■ 2. Transatlantic Relations .....	79
Tania Lațici: Transatlantic relations and PESCO: careful what you wish for.....	80
Alvaro Renedo: The Lisbon Treaty and transatlantic dialogue: impact and inefficiencies.....	94
Ioannis Pateras: EU-NATO operational cooperation on maritime issues – the re-institutionalisation of a relationship: a theoretical and conceptual approach.....	110
■ 3. Challenges in the Mediterranean Region .....	137
Mariann Vecsey: The Mediterranean Challenge.....	138
Despina Papadaki: Libya: a missed opportunity for CSDP?.....	150
■ 4. Challenges of Counter Terrorism .....	169
Elena López Werner: The external dimension of the EU's counter- terrorism policy in the fight against transnational terrorist networks.....	170
Eleni Kapsokoli: The challenge of defining cyberterrorism within the EU ..	183
Nathalie Marcus: Challenges of the CSDP: INTCEN - an underestimated body for counter-terrorism? .....	197
■ 5. Challenges of cyber security and dual-use items .....	225
Victor Adrian Vevera: Conceptualising EU digital diplomacy as a CFSP strategy for international change management .....	226
Alexandru-Cosmin Dumitru: Emerging risks and threats to the financial security of the European Union formed under a growing interest in virtual currencies.....	247
Valentin-Gabriel Georgescu: 5G Technology and their Role for the EU and the CSDP .....	265
Iryna Leroy: The concept of 'information security', 'reputation defence' and 'cyber autonomy' in the context of the Common Security and Defence Policy .....	280
György Rózsa: The CSDP and its difficulties arising from the characteristic elements and different aspects of dual-use items.....	298

**Anna Molnár**

## The idea of a European Security and Defence Union

### Abstract

This policy paper summarises and analyses the historical background and the main pillars of the closer defence cooperation ultimately aimed at creating the European Defence Union. In 2016, the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign Affairs and Security Policy set the goal of strategic autonomy and strengthening the EU as a security community, and the implementation of the strategy began<sup>29</sup>. Since 2017 the gradual realisation of deeper European defence cooperation has been built on at least five pillars: the establishment of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), the establishment of the PESCO, the introduction of the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), the creation of the European Defence Fund (EDF), and the establishment of the European Peace Facility (EPF).

**Keywords:** European Union, Defence Union, PESCO, CARD, EDF, EPF

### Introduction

The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) is the youngest policy area of the European Union. It has developed only since the late 1990s with the institutionalisation of the EU's own security and crisis management structures, integrating the tasks and some institutions of the Western European Union (WEU). According to Vasconcelos, after the disappointing and devastating experience of the Yugoslav wars, European leaders set the issue of European defence in motion, stepping over the taboo of closer defence cooperation which developed after the failure of the European Defence Community in 1954<sup>30</sup>. The wars in

29 EEAS, 'Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy', 2016, [https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top\\_stories/pdf/eugs\\_review\\_web.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf).

30 Álvaro de Vasconcelos 'Introduction – 2020: defence beyond the transatlantic paradigm', In: Álvaro de Vasconcelos, *What ambitions for European defence in 2020?* (Condé-sur-Noireau, EU Institute for Security Studies, 2009), pp. 15–26 [https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/What\\_ambitions\\_for\\_European\\_defence\\_in\\_2020\\_0.pdf](https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/What_ambitions_for_European_defence_in_2020_0.pdf)

Yugoslavia became a driving force for deeper cooperation. The milestone in this process was the Saint-Malo declaration by France and the United Kingdom in 1998, which emphasised that the EU must have the capacity to take autonomous action. In the early 2000s, the legal background and the decision-making structures of security and defence policy were developed, and consequently the EU deployed its first CSDP missions and operations.

During the last two decades, parallel to the development of the crisis management structures and to the debate on the EU's relations with NATO, the idea of a European Security and Defence Union and the concept of strategic autonomy have repeatedly appeared. However, since not all EU institutions nor a critical number of Member States supported it, no serious steps have been taken.

The idea of a European Security and Defence Union (ESDU) goes back to the time of the European Convention on the Future of Europe in 2002, which prepared the draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (Constitutional Treaty). During the debate on the Constitutional Treaty, France and Germany proposed the creation of an ESDU. France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg revived the idea in 2003, but the more Atlanticist EU Member States rejected it and the idea of ESDU did not appear in the final text.<sup>31</sup> Following referendums in France and in the Netherlands, the Constitutional Treaty was not ratified. Although the Lisbon Treaty was less ambitious, it did introduce several significant provisions regarding the CSDP (e.g. Article 42(7) on mutual assistance and Articles 42(6) and 46 on the permanent structured cooperation (PESCO)).

Even though ambitious decisions regarding the use of the Lisbon Treaty's full potential were not expected after the failure of the Constitutional Treaty, the European Parliament brought up the idea in a recurrent manner. The 2009 resolution of the European Parliament on the European Security Strategy and ESDP can be considered as an important milestone in the series of proposals. The EP stated that the EU needs to develop its own strategic autonomy, and proposed the creation of a Council of Defence Ministers and the development of Synchronised Armed Forces Europe (SAFE). As the MS and other EU institutions did not back these ideas, new impetus was needed to set the issue of European defence in motion again.

31 Niklas Novák, 'The European Security and Defence Union: how should it look like?', 13 November 2017, <https://www.vocaleurope.eu/the-european-security-and-defence-union-how-should-it-look-like/>; Contribution from Dr Sylvia-Yvonne Kaufmann, member of the Convention 'Requirements for the Constitutional Treaty for a European Union capable of Peace', 11 April 2003, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/CV-681-2003-INIT/en/pdf>.

The realisation of an ESDU continued to be practically unthinkable until 2016.

During the last five years the various EU institutions and EU Member States have supported an acceleration of the deepening of Europe's security and defence cooperation. This process was driven by several external and internal factors. Firstly, we can mention the events of the Arab Spring; secondly, the aggression of Russia in Ukraine, thirdly the mass migration and refugee crisis caused by the turmoil and armed conflicts in the EU's southern neighbourhood. We can also add the worsening EU-US relations during the Presidency of Donald Trump. The result of the referendum on Brexit was another essential reason behind this process. Finally, we cannot omit the changing global environment, which is leading to a new arms race. Despite the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has distracted attention from issues of defence, today the EU is in a two-year process of elaborating a 'Strategic Compass' for its security and defence policy. In 2020, during the German Presidency of the Council, the first common threat analysis of the EU was drawn up, preparing the ground for a joint civil-military doctrine, the Strategic Compass to be finalised during the French Presidency of the Council in 2022.

This policy paper summarises and analyses the historical background and the main pillars of the closer defence cooperation ultimately aimed at creating the European Defence Union. In 2016, the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign Affairs and Security Policy set the goal of strategic autonomy and strengthening the EU as a security community, and the implementation of the strategy began<sup>32</sup>. Since 2017, the gradual realisation of deeper European defence cooperation has been built on at least five pillars: the establishment of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), the establishment of the PESCO, the introduction of the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), the creation of the European Defence Fund (EDF), and the establishment of the European Peace Facility (EPF).

## The EU in a changing international environment

Significant changes have taken place in the international system: competition between great powers and their politics, which was characteristic of the former bipolar international system, has intensified again. Nationalism and the rise of new powers have threatened the liberal

32 EEAS, 'Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy', *op. cit.*



global order and multilateralism. Nearly two decades of US hegemony has started to be eroded by an economically and militarily growing China and a Russia much more ambitious than before. The weakening of the liberal international world order has upset the hitherto established but fragile balance. As a result, the liberal international system based on multilateral cooperation and interdependence, in a Western-inspired multilateral framework, seems to be tearing apart<sup>33</sup>. The changing international environment has forced the EU to redefine itself as a new type of power, and to adapt itself to the world of great powers.

The characteristics of the EU's power have been analysed through a number of different realist or liberal-normative lenses. The criticisms formed by the realist approach clearly drew attention to the lack of hard power tools. Since its creation, the European Union has been conceptualised as a sui generis international actor. It is not a great power in a classical sense, as it was created in opposition to the idea of great powers. It has been described as a 'civilian'<sup>34</sup> or a 'soft' power<sup>35</sup>. As the European Union cannot be labelled as a hard or military power, Manners describes it as a 'normative' power<sup>36</sup>. During the last decades, it has been conceptualised as an ethical<sup>37</sup> or liberal power<sup>38</sup> in international affairs. However, the hybrid power nature of this foreign policy actor still provokes dispute<sup>39</sup>. In many cases, concepts relating to the EU cannot be separated sharply, but are often overlapping. In the literature, it is not uncommon that

- 33 Richard Haass, *A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order*. (New York: Penguin Press, 2017); Ikenberry, G. J., 'The End of Liberal International Order?', *International Affairs*, vol. 94, no 1, pp. 7–23.; Hans Kundnani, 'What is the Liberal International Order?', The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) 2017, <https://www.gmfus.org/publications/what-liberal-international-order#>; Francis Fukuyama, 'The Pandemic and Political Order, It Takes a State', *Foreign Affairs*; July/August 2020, Niklas Helwig and Marco Siddi, 'German Leadership in the Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union', *German Politics*, vol. 29, no 1, (2020), pp. 1–7.
- 34 François Duchêne, 'The European Community and the Uncertainties of Interdependence', In Max Kohnstamm and Wolfgang Hager, eds.: *A Nation Writ Large? Foreign-Policy Problems before the European Community*. (London: Macmillan, 1973) pp. 1–21.; Stavridis, Stelios, "Militarizing" the EU: the Concept of Civilian Power Europe Revisited', *The International Spectator*, vol. 4. no. 36, (2001), pp. 43–50.
- 35 Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004)
- 36 Jan Manners : Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms? *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 40. no 2, (2002). pp. 235–258.
- 37 Lisbeth Aggestam, 'Introduction: ethical power Europe?', *International Affairs*, vol. 84, no 1, (2008), pp. 1–11.
- 38 Wolfgang Wagner, 'Liberal Power Europe', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 55, no 6, (2017), pp. 1398–1414.
- 39 Nathalie Tocci, 'When and why does the EU act as a normative power in its neighbourhood?' In: Heisbourg et al (ed.), *What Prospects for Normative Foreign Policy in a Multipolar World?* CEPS ESF Working Papers. 1–6. p. 29.

the adjectives normative, civilian or even soft are used as synonyms for each other.

The role of the EU is determined by the fact that, in the fields of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and CSDP, intergovernmental cooperation remains the dominant form of decision-making. The dynamics of the European integration process have been defined by the duality of intergovernmentalism and supranationalism. In some areas of external action, e.g. in the case of common trade policy, the EU decision-making processes are based on the community (or union) method, which is not applied for the CFSP and CSDP. The contradiction in this duality encouraged the development of the European Union as a new hybrid political organisation with the characteristics of a supranational entity, in a certain way a state-like player in international relations. The CFSP and CSDP, which are integral parts of the external action of the Union, remained very sensitive policy areas for Member States. Although the CFSP and CSDP are the least communitised policy areas of the EU, the Commission's role has started to grow steadily in recent years. Despite the growing support for more credible European defence, in the period before the Global Strategy deeper cooperation was mainly held back by worries related to sovereignty and by the lack of trust among partners within the EU<sup>40</sup>.

## The idea of the European (Security and) Defence Union

Following the events of the Arab Spring and in parallel with the conflict in Ukraine, a growing need to strengthen defence cooperation appeared. On both sides of the Atlantic, politicians and experts criticised European strategic capability shortfalls (especially strategic enablers, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance capabilities, and cybersecurity), which made it difficult for the EU to become a credible security provider.

In December 2013, the European Council held its first thematic meeting dedicated to defence, identifying priority actions for stronger cooperation<sup>41</sup>. In 2014, the then candidate for Presidency of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker highlighted the need to introduce

40 European Parliament, 'European defence cooperation State of play and thoughts on an EU army', March 2015, p. 5. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/551346/EPRS\\_BRI%282015%29551346\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/551346/EPRS_BRI%282015%29551346_EN.pdf).

41 European Council, 'European Council 19/20 December 2013, Conclusions' [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/140245.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/140245.pdf).

enhanced cooperation in the defence sector, particularly in the area of procurement<sup>42</sup>. However, the idea that attracted the most public attention was Jean-Claude Juncker's announcement in March 2015, regarding the need for a common European army to face external threats<sup>43</sup>. Juncker's announcement provoked intensive debate among experts and politicians in the MS. While some were sceptical about the idea, others considered it food for thought for further debate<sup>44</sup>.

In 2015, the report of experts on More Union in European Defence led by Javier Solana<sup>45</sup> and Jaap de Hoop Scheffer<sup>46</sup> recommended the creation of a European Defence Union (EDU) as the ultimate goal of integration in the field of defence. The report explained that due to the absence of a core group of Member States, there are various regional or geopolitical clusters of cooperation. According to the report, this model of cooperation is based on the principle of variable geometry, namely on the different interests and political wills of the Member States. The authors of the report also proposed the use of the Lisbon Treaty's potential, such as Article 44 TEU and Article 46 (PESCO)<sup>47</sup>.

The 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris also served as an incentive for further deepening as, following the events, France asked for the activation of the EU Treaty's mutual defence clause (Article 42(7) TEU) in order to receive help in its 'war' against the so-called Islamic State (ISIS). On 21 January 2016, the European Parliament welcomed the decision of all MS to help France. The EP adopted, of course, a non-binding resolution on the need to go further and to create a European Defence Union. According to the

42 European Commission, 'Towards a European Defence Union. Towards a More United, Stronger and More Democratic Union', 30 January 2021, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/towards-a-european-defence-union\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/towards-a-european-defence-union_en.pdf).

43 Welt, 'EU-Kommissionspräsident Juncker für europäische Armee', *Welt*, 8 March 2015, <https://www.welt.de/newsticker/news1/article138177624/EU-Kommissionspraesident-Juncker-fuer-europaeische-Armee.html>; Jean-Claude Juncker, 'NATO is not enough, EU needs an army', *EurActiv*, 9 March 2016, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/juncker-nato-is-not-enough-eu-needs-an-army/>

44 European Parliament, 'European defence cooperation State of play and thoughts on an EU army', March 2015, p. 5. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/551346/EPRS\\_BRI%282015%29551346\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/551346/EPRS_BRI%282015%29551346_EN.pdf).

45 Former High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and NATO Secretary General

46 Former NATO Secretary General

47 Javier Solana, 'More Union in European defence. Report of a CEPS Task Force', Centre for European Policy Studies, 2015, p. 7–8, [www.ceps.eu/system/files/TFonEuropeanDefence.pdf](http://www.ceps.eu/system/files/TFonEuropeanDefence.pdf).

document, the process could lead to the creation of a European army in the long term<sup>48</sup>.

In 2016, the result of the referendum on Brexit significantly accelerated the integration process in this area. The Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, adopted in June 2016 just a few days after the British referendum, expressed the goal of strategic autonomy and strengthening the EU as a security community<sup>49</sup>. After years of immobility in the field of defence integration, Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (EU HR/VP) successfully presented the Global Strategy to the European Council and the implementation of the strategy started.

In 2016, Germany, France, Italy and Spain were the most committed supporters of closer integration in the field of defence among the EU Member States<sup>50</sup>. The United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union has created a new situation. On the one hand, after leaving the EU, British politics were no longer able to hinder further deepening of integration in this area<sup>51</sup>. On the other hand, Brexit has meant a further reduction in European defence expenditure, as the UK's defence budget accounted for 20% of the total Member States defence budget. Since the Brexit referendum, France and Germany have increasingly taken the lead in the process of reforming defence integration. In an open letter on 27 June 2016, four days after the referendum, the French and German foreign

48 European Parliament, 'Next step in mutual defence – European Defence Union, say MEPs', 21 January 2016, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/hu/press-room/20160114IPR09904/next-step-in-mutual-defence-european-defence-union-say-meps>

49 EEAS, 'Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy', *op. cit.*

50 Wolfgang Ischinger, 'Germany's Foreign Policy Lacks Big Ideas.', *The Guardian*, 29 November 2013. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2013/nov/29/german-foreign-policy-coalition-caution>; 'Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel und Präsident Emmanuel Macron beim 19. Deutsch-Französischen Ministerrat', 13 July 2017, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/pressekonferenzen/pressekonferenz-von-bundeskanzlerin-angela-merkel-und-praesident-emmanuel-macron-beim-19-deutsch-franzoesischen-ministerrat-432912>; Matteo Renzi, 'Europa', 2018, [www.matteorenzi.it/europa/](http://www.matteorenzi.it/europa/); Partito Democratico, 'Il nostro futuro si chiama Stati Uniti d'Europa', 15 February 2018, [www.partitodemocratico.it/approfondimenti/unione-europea-stati-uniti-europa/](http://www.partitodemocratico.it/approfondimenti/unione-europea-stati-uniti-europa/); Giovanni Grevi, 'What Ambition for Defence in the EU?', 19 October 2016, ISPI, <http://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/what-ambition-defence-eu-15855>.

51 Andrew Rettman, 'UK to veto EU 'defence union'', *EUobserver*, 17. Sep 2016, <https://euobserver.com/institutional/135134>.

ministers emphasised the need to establish a European Defence Union.<sup>52</sup> In September 2016, German and French defence ministers presented their plan for implementing the Global Strategy. They proposed to build an EU headquarters, strengthen the Eurocorps, rethink the Athena system, establish security and defence partnerships with African countries, develop a European research agenda, strengthen relations with NATO, revitalise the battlegroup concept and realise the potential of the Lisbon Treaty, in particular the implementation of the PESCO<sup>53</sup>.

In September 2016, at the Foreign Affairs Council in Bratislava, Federica Mogherini presented the main steps for implementing the Global Strategy (e.g. the European Defence Action Plan (EDAP)), NATO-EU cooperation and the EDF<sup>54</sup>. In September 2016, concerning the plans, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, in his annual speech on the State of the European Union emphasised, inter alia, the need for closer integration in the defence area, such as the establishment of a single headquarters for EU missions, the realisation of the EDF and the PESCO<sup>55</sup>. Although the EP lacks real decision-making roles in the field of CSDP, it also supported these proposals. According to the resolution of the European Parliament in 2016, the EDU should provide guarantees and capabilities to EU Member States beyond their individual states. The EP also proposed the establishment of a Council format for defence ministers<sup>56</sup>.

In 2017, the European Commission published the *Reflection Paper on the Future of European Defence*, highlighting that ‘the foundations of a European security and defence union are gradually being built’ and the

- 52 Nicole Koenig and Marie Walter-Franke, ‘France and Germany: Spearheading a European Security and Defence Union?’, 19 July 2017, [www.delorsinstitut.de/2015/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/20170719\\_FR-D-EU-Security\\_Koenig-Walter.pdf](http://www.delorsinstitut.de/2015/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/20170719_FR-D-EU-Security_Koenig-Walter.pdf); Jean-Marc von Ayrault and Frank-Walter Steinmeier, ‘Ein starkes Europa in einer unsicheren’ [www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/281670/c65ad55fdee0a76fe393492d8c3e3b1a/160624-bm-am-fra-dl-data.pdf](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/281670/c65ad55fdee0a76fe393492d8c3e3b1a/160624-bm-am-fra-dl-data.pdf).
- 53 ‘Revitalising CSDP: Towards a Comprehensive, Realistic and Credible Defence in the EU’, Senato cited by: Nicole Koenig and Marie Walter-Franke, ‘France and Germany: Spearheading a European Security and Defence Union?’, 19 July 2017, [www.delorsinstitut.de/2015/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/20170719\\_FR-D-EU-Security\\_Koenig-Walter.pdf](http://www.delorsinstitut.de/2015/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/20170719_FR-D-EU-Security_Koenig-Walter.pdf); Anna, Molnár, ‘Az Európai Unió külkapcsolati rendszere és eszközei. A külkapcsolatoktól a kül-, a biztonság- és védelempolitikáig’ (Budapest: Dialóg Campus, 2018)
- 54 ‘Informal Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers’, 2–3 September 2016. <http://www.eu2016.sk/en/political-and-expert-meetings/informal-meeting-of-foreign-affairs-ministers-gymnich>.
- 55 Jean-Claude Juncker, ‘State of the Union Address 2016: Towards a better Europe - a Europe that protects, empowers and defends’, 14 September 2014, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH\\_16\\_3043](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_16_3043).
- 56 European Parliament, ‘European Parliament resolution of 22 November 2016 on the European Defence Union (2016/2052(INI))’, 22 November, 2016, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52016IP0435>.

ESDU 'should encourage a stronger alignment of strategic cultures, as well as a common understanding of threats and appropriate responses. It will require joint decision-making and action, as well as greater financial solidarity at European level'<sup>57</sup>. In September 2017, Jean-Claude Juncker, in his annual speech on the State of the European Union expressed that by 2025 the EU needed to become a fully-fledged European Defence Union<sup>58</sup>.

Although the definition of the ESDU or EDU is still not clear, the gradual realisation of deeper European defence cooperation began after the adoption of the Global Strategy. Since 2017 this long process has been built on at least five pillars: the establishment of the PESCO, the introduction of the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), the establishment of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), the creation of the European Defence Fund (EDF), and the establishment of the European Peace Facility (EPF). It is worth mentioning that the MPCC created a permanent command structure for EU (non-executive) military operations, and with the creation of the EDF it became possible to fund research and joint development defence projects from the EU budget, in both cases for the first time. These achievements were unimaginable just a decade ago<sup>59</sup>.

Although the 2018 State of the Union speech did not mention the idea of a European Defence Union, it highlighted that due to the geopolitical situation, the moment for European sovereignty had come. Juncker stated that it was time for Europe to take its destiny into its own hands and to play a role, as a Union, in shaping global affairs as a more sovereign actor in international relations. According to his vision, European sovereignty is born of Member States' national sovereignty and does not replace it. Sharing sovereignty makes the Member States stronger. He also emphasised that this process does not mean the militarisation of the European Union; it means becoming more autonomous and living up to the EU's global responsibilities<sup>60</sup>.

57 European Commission, 'Reflection Paper on the Future of European Defence', 7 June 2017, p.11. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/reflection-paper-defence\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/reflection-paper-defence_en.pdf)

58 Jean-Claude Juncker 'President Jean-Claude Juncker's State of the Union Address 2017', 13 September 2017, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH\\_17\\_3165](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_17_3165).

59 European Commission, 'European Defence Action Plan, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions', 30 November 2016, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016DC0950&from=EN>.

60 Jean-Claude Juncker 'State of the Union 2018, The hour of European Sovereignty', 2018, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/soteu2018-speech\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/soteu2018-speech_en_0.pdf).

An important predecessor of the EU's concept of strategic autonomy appeared in the 1994 French White Paper<sup>61</sup> and in the 1998 Franco-British Joint Declaration in Saint-Malo.<sup>62</sup> The 2016 Global Strategy clearly articulated the need for strategic autonomy of the EU<sup>63</sup>. Not only the deteriorating international security environment and Brexit, but also the fact that US attention has turned to the Asia-Pacific region over the past decade intensified the debate regarding strategic autonomy<sup>64</sup>.

To this day, a formal definition of the concept of strategic autonomy has not yet been developed at EU level. The concept can be summarised as the EU's ability to ensure its security and to act autonomously on land, in air, at sea, in space and in cyberspace, to project power, to respond to external crises, and finally, to decide independently in the field of defence policy<sup>65</sup>. Member States have different interests and views on the concept<sup>66</sup>. So far,

- 61 'Livre Blanc sur la Défense', 1994, <http://www.livreblancdefenseetsecurite.gouv.fr/pdf/le-livre-blanc-sur-la-defense-1994.pdf>.
- 62 CVCE, 'Joint Declaration issued at the British-French Summit', 4 December 1998, [https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2008/3/31/f3cd16fb-fc37-4d52-936f-c8e9bc80f24f/publishable\\_en.pdf](https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2008/3/31/f3cd16fb-fc37-4d52-936f-c8e9bc80f24f/publishable_en.pdf).
- 63 EEAS, 'Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy', *op. cit.*
- 64 Sven Biscop, 'All or nothing? The EU Global Strategy and defence policy after the Brexit', *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 37, no 3, 10 October 2016, pp. 431-445; Lucie Béraud-Sudreau, and Alice Pannier, 'An 'improbable Paris-Berlin-commission triangle': usages of Europe and the revival of EU defense cooperation after 2016', *Journal of European Integration*, 19 March 2020, pp. 1-16.; Ulrich Krotz and Joachim Schild, 'Back to the future? Franco-German bilateralism in Europe's post-Brexit union', *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 25, no 8, 6 May 2018, pp. 1174–1193.
- 65 Sven Biscop, 'European Defence: What's in the CARDS for PESCO?', October 2019, <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/content/uploads/2017/10/SPB91-Biscop.pdf?type=pdf> (2021.01.30.); Sven Biscop, 'European Strategy: New Future for an Old Power.' (New York: Routledge, 2018); Varga Gergely, 'Towards European Strategic Autonomy?: Evaluating the New CSDP Initiatives.' July 2017, [https://kki.hu/assets/upload/07\\_KKI-Studies\\_CSDP\\_VargaG\\_20171003.pdf](https://kki.hu/assets/upload/07_KKI-Studies_CSDP_VargaG_20171003.pdf); Camille De Sutter, 'Europe's road to strategic autonomy: Summarising the concrete steps taken', 3 June 2020, <https://finabel.org/europes-road-to-strategic-autonomy-summarising-the-concrete-steps-taken/>; Ben Jones, 'CSDP defence capabilities development.' In: *10 Years Of CSDP. Four in-depth analyses requested by the Sub-Committee on Security and Defence of the European Parliament* (EP). 2020 p. 14 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2020/603485/EXPO\\_IDA\(2020\)603485\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2020/603485/EXPO_IDA(2020)603485_EN.pdf); Daniel Flott, 'Strategic autonomy: towards 'European sovereignty' in defence?', December 2018, [https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%2012\\_-\\_Strategic%20Autonomy.pdf](https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%2012_-_Strategic%20Autonomy.pdf).
- 66 Inez von Weitershausen and David Schäfer and Wolfgang Wessels, 'A 'Primus Inter Pares' in EU Foreign Policy? – German Leadership in the European Council during the Libyan and Ukrainian Crises', *German Politics*, vol. 29, no 1 (2020), p. 42; Philipp Grüll and Sarah Lawton, 'Sovereignty and solidarity: Germany's plans for the EU's foreign policy', <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/sovereignty-and-solidarity-germanys-plans-for-the-eus-foreign-policy/>; Stefano Recchia, 'A legitimate sphere of influence: Understanding France's turn to multilateralism in Africa', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 43, no 4 (2020), pp. 508-533.; Paul M. II Silva and Selden Zachary, 'Economic interdependence and economic sanctions: a case study of European Union sanctions on Russia.' *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 33, no. 2 (2020), pp. 229–251.

the EU has launched several initiatives to strengthen European defence capabilities and autonomy (PESCO, CARD, EFD, MPCC). However, in terms of size and ambitions, none of these developments has fully met the initial high expectations.

In 2019, the new President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen proposed to create a European Defence Union by 2025<sup>67</sup> and to lead a 'geopolitical Commission' and Josep Borrell, the new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), stated that the EU needs to 'learn the language of power'. Although the historical connotations of geopolitics are controversial, the new Commission embraced the concept. According to Fiott, it would not be easy for the EU to survive in the world of Mackinder or Mahan where 'the ideas such as the military control of the "heartland" or mastery of the seas are decisive'<sup>68</sup>.

Although the 2020 State of the Union speech by Ursula von der Leyen did not mention the establishment of an ESDU or strategic autonomy<sup>69</sup>, the process continues. Member States governments and institutions put together the first threat analysis in a two-year process which will lead to the Strategic Compass. According to Fiott, the Compass will hopefully 'give concrete politico-strategic guidance for the existing level of ambition so that it can deliver on operational deployability and capability development'.<sup>70</sup> At the video conference of the European Council in February 2021, the President of the European Commission emphasised the need to create the EDU on building blocks such as the PESCO, supported by the financial resources of the EDF<sup>71</sup>. In May 2021 the Foreign Affairs Council discussed

67 Ursula Von der Leyen, 'A Union that strives for more. My agenda for Europe. Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2019-2024'. [http://www.eunec.eu/sites/www.eunec.eu/files/attachment/files/political-guidelines-next-commission\\_en\\_kopie.pdf](http://www.eunec.eu/sites/www.eunec.eu/files/attachment/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en_kopie.pdf)

68 Daniel Fiott, 'Uncharted Territory? Towards a common threat analysis and a Strategic Compass for EU security and defence', 16 July 2020, p. 1. [https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%2016%20Strategic%20Compass\\_0.pdf](https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%2016%20Strategic%20Compass_0.pdf).

69 Ursula Von der Leyen, 'State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen at the European Parliament Plenary', 16 September 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/ov/SPEECH\\_20\\_1655](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/ov/SPEECH_20_1655)

70 Daniel Fiott, 2020. *op. cit.* p. 7, [https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%2016%20Strategic%20Compass\\_0.pdf](https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%2016%20Strategic%20Compass_0.pdf).

71 European Commission, 'Von der Leyen at the video conference of the members of the European Council discusses vaccination, security and defence, and Southern Neighbourhood', 26 February 2021, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ac\\_21\\_892](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ac_21_892).



the idea of an initial entry force<sup>72</sup>, which was supported by 14 EU Member States<sup>73</sup>.

## The main pillars of closer defence integration

### *Military Planning and Conduct Capacity – MPCC*

The establishment of the MPCC in 2017 is one of the pillars of closer defence cooperation. It can be considered as the embryo of a permanent military command structure in the EU. Since 2017, the MPCC established within the EU Military Staff has provided permanent strategic command to non-executive military missions. It holds the command of the EU Training Missions (EUTM) currently in operation in Mali, the Central African Republic and Somalia. The Director-General of the EU Military Staff is also the Director of the MPCC.<sup>74</sup>

In November 2018, the Council decided to strengthen the staff and responsibilities of the MPCC. According to the decision of the Member States, by the end of 2020, the MPCC should have been ready to provide permanent operational planning and conduct structure to one executive military CSDP operation.<sup>75</sup> In April 2019, the European External Action Service prepared the concept regarding the further development of the MPCC for the EU Military Committee, which detailed the planned

72 Foreign Affairs Council (Defence), Main results, 6 May 2021, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/05/06/>

73 Robin Emmott: EU seeks rapid response military force, two decades after first try. May 5, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-seeks-rapid-response-military-force-two-decades-after-first-try-2021-05-05/>

74 'Concept Note: Operational Planning and Conduct Capabilities for CSDP Missions and Operations', 6 March 2017, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6881-2017-INIT/en/pdf>; 'Europe as a stronger global actor, European Defence Union', October 2016, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-europe-as-a-stronger-global-actor/file-european-defence-union>; Jolyon Howorth, 'EU–NATO Cooperation: The Key to Europe's Security Future', *European Security*, vol. 26, no. 3 (2017), pp. 454-459; Yf Reykers, 'A permanent headquarters under construction? The Military Planning and Conduct Capability as a proximate principal' *Journal of European Integration*, vol. 41, no. 6 (2019), pp. 783-799.

75 'Security and Defence: Council welcomes the substantive progress made during the last two years', 19 November 2018, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/11/19/security-and-defence-council-welcomes-the-substantive-progress-made-during-the-last-two-years/>.

command and control structure<sup>76</sup>. Negotiations on the new tasks of the MPCC are still ongoing, and a final decision has not yet been reached<sup>77</sup>.

### *Permanent structured cooperation – PESCO*

One of the most important innovations of the Lisbon Treaty was the extension of enhanced cooperation to the field of CSDP. The Treaty created the permanent structured cooperation as a new, flexible instrument for cooperation with the aim of promoting interoperability, reducing capability shortfalls and strengthening cooperation in the field of defence. The EU Treaty did not link the establishment of the PESCO to a minimum number of Member States. Following the decision of the Member States, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy gives an opinion on the Member States' intentions. The EU Council takes the final decision by qualified majority. The European Parliament must be informed about the process. The development of the PESCO followed the German inclusive approach instead of the French exclusive one.<sup>78</sup> After the decision of Member States, in December 2017, the EU Council decided by qualified majority to launch the PESCO with the participation of 25 countries, i.e. excluding Denmark, the United Kingdom and Malta.

The European External Action Service and the European Defence Agency (EDA) provide the PESCO secretariat jointly. One of the main tasks of the EDA is to formulate proposals based on the CARD to achieve the goals of the Capability Development Plan (CDP). Compared with the previous activities of the EDA, the significance of the PESCO is shown

76 'EU Concept for Military Command and Control - Rev 8.', 23 April 2019, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8798-2019-INIT/en/pdf>.

77 'List of Working papers (WK) distributed to the European Union Military Committee in the second quarter of 2020', 17 July 2020, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9586-2020-INIT/en/pdf>

78 Daniel Fiott and Antonio Missiroli and Thierry Tardy, 'Permanent Structured Cooperation: What's in a Name?' Chaillot Papers, No.142, EU Institute for Security Studies. 13 November 2017, <https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/permanent-structured-cooperation-what%E2%80%99s-name>.

by the fact that the commitments of the Member States regarding the projects have become accountable<sup>79</sup>.

Currently forty-seven PESCO projects are running. The PESCO has developed a two-level governance system. On the one hand, there are common rules and on the other hand, the participating Member States decide on the details of each project. The fact that PESCO projects can receive additional funding from the EDF can make the cooperation sustainable<sup>80</sup>. However, the success of PESCO projects depends primarily on the political will of the participating Member States,<sup>81</sup> as the PESCO has received criticism regarding its implementation<sup>82</sup>.

### ***Coordinated Annual Review on Defence – CARD***

At the Council meeting in November 2016, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy presented the implementation plan on security and defence to the Member States. The implementation plan made 13 proposals to achieve the new strategic objectives laid down in the Global Strategy; the initiative of the CARD was one of them<sup>83</sup>.

Contrary to the original idea of the 'European Defence Semester' process (similar to the European Semester), the Member States finally accepted a more flexible model based on voluntary consultations. The EDA, in cooperation with the European External Action Service, has developed elements of the review process. The EU Military Committee and the competent authorities of the Member States also discussed the policy document detailing the CARD elements. As a result, the final draft was prepared based on a truly wide-ranging consultation. On 18 May 2017, the

79 Anna Molnár: 'PESCO'. In: Zoltán, Krajnc (ed.), *Hadtudományi lexikon*. (Budapest: Dialóg Campus Kiadó, 2019), p. 880-881.; Council of the EU, 'Council Decision establishing the list of projects to be developed under PESCO', 1 March 2018, [data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6393-2018-INIT/en/pdf](http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6393-2018-INIT/en/pdf); 'Defence cooperation: 23 member states sign joint notification on the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)', 13 November 2017, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/11/13/defence-cooperation-23-member-states-sign-joint-notification-on-pesco/>; 'Defence Cooperation: Council Establishes Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), with 25 Member States Participating.', 11 December 2017, [www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/12/11/defence-cooperation-pesco-25-member-states-participating/#](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/12/11/defence-cooperation-pesco-25-member-states-participating/#).

80 Anna Molnár and Laura Szabolcs, 'Megegyezett együttműködés, változó geometria, PESCO', *Hadtudomány*, vol. 30, no 4. (2020), pp. 77–106. [http://real.mtak.hu/124268/1/077-106\\_Molnar\\_Szabolcs.pdf](http://real.mtak.hu/124268/1/077-106_Molnar_Szabolcs.pdf).

81 Sven Bischof 'Battalions to Brigades: The Future of European Defence. Survival', vol. 62, no 5, p. 105–118.

82 Steven Blockmans and Dylan Macchiarini Crosson, 'Differentiated integration within PESCO, Clusters and convergence in EU defence', 9 Dec 2019, CEPS, <https://www.ceps.eu/ceps-publications/differentiated-integration-within-pesco/>.

83 Jones (2020), *op. cit.* p. 14.

Council of the European Union approved the rules for the establishment of the CARD. The EDA, in cooperation with the EU Military Staff, provides the CARD Secretariat. In 2018, the EDA led the first trial operation of CARD. The aim of the de facto two-year process is to provide a comprehensive overview of national defence planning and developments, in order to address existing shortfalls, to identify opportunities for further cooperation, and to ensure coherence and optimal use of defence spending. The recommendations are detailed in the final report, which is presented to the ministers for defence<sup>84</sup>. The first full report was completed in November 2020, providing an overview of the national defence planning and capability development efforts of the 26 EDA Member States<sup>85</sup>.

### *European Defence Fund – EDF*

In September 2016, Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, announced the establishment of the EDF. As part of the EU Global Strategy implementation process, the European Commission presented the EDAP in November, which had already contained concrete proposals for the creation of the fund. The European Commission started testing the EU-level defence cooperation with the Preparatory Action on Defence Research programme between 2017 and 2019, and the European Defence Industrial Development Program (EDIDP) between 2019 and 2020.

According to the Commission's initial proposal, the new fund provided EUR 90 million per year between 2017 and 2019, during the testing period of the mechanism, and around EUR 500 million per year for the budget period 2021-2027 to support the defence industry. The fund intends to complement national resources available for defence research, procurement and the development of prototypes. The main novelty of this programme was that, for the first time, it became possible to use EU budget resources for the development of the defence industry. The legal basis for establishing the EDF was Articles 173 and 182 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

In June 2018, the European Commission announced its proposal for the multiannual financial framework between 2021 and 2027. The

84 EDA, 'Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD)', November 2016, <https://www.eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/our-current-priorities/coordinated-annual-review-on-defence-card>); Anna, MOLNÁR, 'Koordinált éves felülvizsgálat'. In: Zoltán, KRAJNC (ed.), *Hadtudományi lexikon*. (Budapest: Dialóg Campus Kiadó, 2019), pp. 633–634.

85 'EU védelmi miniszterek videókonferenciája', 20 November 2020, <https://kormany.hu/hirek/eu-vedelmi-miniszterek-vedeokonferenciaja>

Commission planned to increase the EDF's budget to EUR 13 billion in order to increase the European Union's strategic autonomy and global role. The fund, which co-finances projects with at least three participants from at least three Member States, aims to act as a catalyst to build an innovative and competitive industrial and scientific base and to strengthen small and medium enterprises. The collaborative projects, which are realised under the PESCO, can receive an additional 10% co-financing from the fund<sup>86</sup>. After heated debates, in December 2020 the Council adopted and the European Parliament gave its consent to the EU's multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027. The EDF will receive EUR 7.9 billion<sup>87</sup>.

### *European Peace Facility – EPF*

In 2018, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy presented a proposal to create a EUR 10.5 billion instrument, the European Peace Facility. The new off-budget financial instrument will be part of the EU's crisis management toolbox. It aims to make the EU 'a more efficient and responsive global security provider'. The new instrument replaces the African Peace Facility and the Athena Mechanism, and it is funded by Member States' annual GNI-based contributions. According to the original targets, 35-45% of the operational costs of military CSDP operations will be covered by this off-budget fund. In addition, it allows financial support for partner countries in Africa and the EU's neighbourhood to strengthen their resilience<sup>88</sup>.

In December 2020, the EU Council reached a political agreement on the establishment of the European Peace Facility to finance military- or defence-related external activities. Compared to the original proposal, the new instrument can count on much less, only EUR 5 billion over the period

86 Anna Molnár, 'Európai Védelmi Alap' In: Zoltán, KRAJNC (ed.), *Hadtudományi lexikon.* (Budapest: Dialóg Campus Kiadó, 2019). p. 247-248.; European Commission, 'European Defence Action Plan', *op. cit.*; 'EU budget: Stepping up the EU's role as a security and defence provider', 13 June 2018, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_18\\_4121](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_18_4121).

87 Council of the EU, 'Long-term EU budget 2021-2027 and recovery package', 17 December 2020, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/the-eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget-2021-2027/>.

88 Matthias Deneckere, 'The uncharted path towards a European Peace Facility' ECDPM Discussion Paper, No. 248., 18 March 2019, <https://ecdpm.org/publications/uncharted-path-towards-european-peace-facility/> (2021.01.30); 'Decision establishing a European Peace Facility, P8\_TA-PROV(2019)0330', 18 March 2019 <https://ecdpm.org/publications/uncharted-path-towards-european-peace-facility/>; EEAS, 'European Peace Facility - An EU off-budget fund to build peace and strengthen international security', 13 June 2018, [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/46285/european-peace-facility-eu-budget-fund-build-peace-and-strengthen-international-security\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/46285/european-peace-facility-eu-budget-fund-build-peace-and-strengthen-international-security_en).

between 2021 and 2027. The European Peace Facility, together with the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), supports partner countries in the prevention and management of crises, strengthening their resilience<sup>89</sup>.

## Conclusions

During the last decades, the international system has changed significantly, and the liberal international order based on multilateral foundations has weakened. Despite the Lisbon Treaty's goal of a stronger, more cohesive, more coherent and more effective Union, the EU is still struggling to become a credible international security actor. Factors such as the deteriorating security environment, internal and external crises, and Brexit have on the one hand accelerated the integration processes. On the other hand, they have also highlighted the weaknesses of the CFSP and CSDP institutional and decision-making systems. Before the EU's Global Strategy (2016) and the result of the Brexit referendum, the full use of the Lisbon Treaty's potential was unthinkable. However, since 2016, in a crisis period, the deepening of integration has begun in the field of CSDP with small steps.

Nowadays the findings of Altiero Spinelli are valid once again. Regarding the European integration process, he pointed out that although national governments are generally conservative, in moments of 'creative tension' generated by crisis, governments are able to renew and reform the European institutional structures, overcoming their own limitations<sup>90</sup>. During the last years, several questions have been raised concerning the future deepening of the EU. However, it is clear that the integration process has come through this deadlock and many reforms have been launched.

One of the key questions regarding the future is how the EU can transform itself, building on the opportunities offered by the treaties, from a security community that focuses mainly on its own security and complements the work of other international organisations, to a truly fully-fledged defence union. Although this process will likely take a long time, it is already clear that the growing role of the European Commission and the emergence of EU funds to finance defence developments have

89 Council of the EU, 'Council reaches a political agreement on the European Peace Facility', 18 December 2020, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/12/18/council-reaches-a-political-agreement-on-the-european-peace-facility/>

90 Altiero Spinelli: *The European Adventure. Tasks for the Enlarged Community*. (London: Charles Knight & CO. 1972)

marked the beginning of a long process of communitisation and further Europeanisation of the CSDP. However, the success of this process depends primarily on the political will of the EU Member States. In the absence of real political determination, the old Chinese saying mentioned by Nick Witney concerning the PESCO can be true again: 'big noise on stairs, nobody coming down.'<sup>91</sup>

91 Nick Witney, 'EU defence efforts miss the open goal again', 15 November, 2017, [http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_eu\\_defence\\_efforts\\_miss\\_the\\_open\\_goal\\_again](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_eu_defence_efforts_miss_the_open_goal_again).